

Rob Papen Sub BoomBass | €99

Rob Papen returns with another powerful, feature-filled soft synth. **Steve Hillier** explores SubBoomBass' bottom end...



WHAT IS IT?
A new soft synth from Rob Papen, specialising in bass

CONTACT
Who: Rob Papen
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HIGHLIGHTS
1 Sounds superb
2 Easy mode gives you the most important parameters in an uncluttered window
3 100s of presets that cover every synth bass sound you'll ever need

SPECS
System requirements
Supported technology: AU, RTAS, VST
PC: Windows XP/Vista 32/ Vista 64
Mac: OS X 10.4 or later (Universal Binary)

The name Rob Papen is synonymous with excellent soft synths. Albino, his first big hit, has been in every serious engineer's plug-in folder for years now, and Predator has been blowing up dancefloors since its release in 2007. SubBoomBass, the latest addition to the team, is built around the same synth engine as Predator and is all about bass. It aims to be your 'go-to' synth for low-end duties, and with a heritage as strong as this, it's worth serious consideration.

How low can you go?

SubBoomBass downloaded and installed easily on my MacBook and ran in Logic without any problems (it requires a Syncrosoft USB key to authorise and run).
On launching, the first thing you notice is that the SubBoomBass window is large, very large – over 1000 pixels wide and 600 deep. This is a good thing. All the controls you'll need for sound design are laid out in a logical manner in a very funky looking

interface. Best of all, you can switch to 'easy mode' which reduces the number of parameters down to the essentials needed for tweaking presets. Handy if you're adjusting sounds in real time and a good example of SubBoomBass's 'no-nonsense' attitude.

The sound engine is a two-oscillator/two-envelope/dual-filter synthesizer setup. The oscillators feature all the analogue waveforms that you would expect plus a bunch of samples (pick bass, djembe, tom toms etc) and digital waves for that esoteric touch. These are versatile, sharp-sounding oscillators, each including PWM, FM, sub oscillators and even oscillator sync. There are various hi-, lo- and mid-pass filters plus notch, comb and an unusual 'vox' filter, which imitates vowel sounds.

Overall, the filters are smooth, warm, and perfectly suited to bass sounds, although I was surprised that none of the versions would self-oscillate. You have the facility to use the filters in parallel, series and 'split' mode, where oscillator 1 is routed

through filter 1 and oscillator 2 is routed through filter 2 for extra versatility. This is one powerful synthesizer! The built-in step sequencer can be triggered by a key press and routed to many of the parameters of a sound, including pitch, filter cutoff and others.

It's fun, but it's here that I feel SubBoomBass misses a trick. I'd like to have seen a 'randomise' facility as a shortcut to some interesting sequences. In fact, a sound randomising function is curiously missing too – maybe version 2?

Conclusion

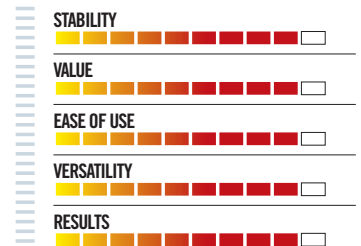
SubBoomBass does not set out to emulate the great bass synths of the past, such as the Minimoog or TB303. It can sound perfectly analogue if you want it to, but it covers a much wider range of sounds than any one of these vintage units could manage, and it does this blindingly well. There are six banks of 128 presets containing just about every kind of synth bass sound you'll ever need including a bank entirely devoted to sub-bass booms, drones and kicks.

These will surely cover every eventuality when you need raw power on the dancefloor. But it doesn't stop there – this synth is just as happy creating metallic DX7-style FM sounds as it is covering the entire range of analogue sounds. In short, if your synth bass sound can't be found or created in SubBoomBass, you're doing something wrong!

It brings a smile to any reviewer's face when they test a product that is designed for a particular task and gets it exactly right. SubBoomBass is essential for anyone making Dance music in 2009. It caters for everything, from the woofiest, dirtiest Dubstep grunt to the most sparkling percussive Techno bass, and pretty much everything in between. **FM**



FutureMusic VERDICT



A synth plug-in catering for all of your bass needs, SubboomBass hits the bullseye.